SOPA 200: Social Policy

Fall 2019 | **T/R 9:25-10:40**
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HRZ 102 | Office Hrs: M 1-3, OBA

Course Description

Social policy is the large and heterogeneous set of programs and laws that aim to improve society's wellbeing by redistributing resources, directly and indirectly providing social services, regulating the private provision of social services, etc. This course develops a framework for the study of social policy in the U.S. using an interdisciplinary approach. Drawing on theory and research from sociology, political science, economics, and psychology, the first half of the course examines key concepts, themes, mechanisms, processes and intellectual debates that will enable students to accurately describe and explain the nature and distribution of social problems and disadvantage across people and places in the U.S., provide students with different explanations and rationales for when and why governments intervene in society and pursue redistributive social policies, and elucidate why the U.S. is such an outlier among OECD countries when it comes to the development of its welfare state. In the second half of the course, we will focus in more detail on the five pillars of social policy: education, employment, health, housing, and welfare/social security.

Course Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course you will have:

- Developed a framework for analyzing how social policy is formulated and implemented in the U.S.
- Understood how socio-demographic, political, economic, and attitudinal factors shape both social problems and the policies designed to address them.
- Developed a working knowledge of key terms, concepts and ideas in the study of social policy and social protection
- Assessed the major political institutions and actors involved in the social policy process
- Developed the capacity to analyze and assess alternative approaches to social policy interventions
- Identified and understood the historical development of the social protection system in the U.S. and policymaking processes and outcomes in the key social policy areas.

Specific learning outcomes of the course include:

- Critical thinking abilities—via class discussion, writing assignments, exams
- Research skills (Identifying and assessing data sources, data reporting, visualization and interpretation, understanding cause & effect) —in class work, assignments, final paper

- Communication skills (Written, oral and graphic communication, presentation strategies and methods)—in class work, writing assignments, presentations, final exam

Course Requirements[1] and Grades

I view this course as a learning community and require that each student be actively engaged. A necessary but not sufficient condition for this is regular classroom attendance. Absences mean missed opportunities to both learn from me and your fellow classmates and share your unique insights and perspectives. Students will also be working on in-class activities in groups throughout the semester, so attendance is mandatory to get credit for this work. To participate meaningfully in our learning community, it essential for students to not simply do the assigned readings/videos before class, but to also reflect on and engage them by applying them to specific issues, groups, and experiences.

The course covers complex social problems and policies that touch on controversial issues. Disagreement and divergent opinions are natural and expected. However, the course prioritizes evidenced-based research and findings (not opinion or normative theory) and is firmly rooted in the scientific method. There is nothing wrong with being passionate about an issue or idea, but we must all be willing to listen to and consider very seriously, other positions and what experts, facts, and empirical findings have to say. Students must be willing to engage in self-reflection and self-discipline in order to create a classroom climate where there is trust, where students feel safe expressing themselves, and where we are not afraid to make mistakes. Open and honest discussion and oral communication are critical to the learning outcomes of this course.

Assignments and Grading

The first requirement of this course is that students keep up with the reading and participate meaningfully in class discussions. Class attendance is mandatory. To get the most out of this course, it will be necessary for students to engage the readings and to challenge both their own and each others' preconceived notions about the social problems and social policy in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world. The syllabus includes prompts and guided questions for each class session's readings. You should be ready to discuss these in class. In addition to in-class discussion, the class participation grade will also be based on short, online assignments and participation in group activities and projects in class.

There are three shorter assignments for this course and a final project that culminates in a 12-15 page white paper. Students will also present key findings from their paper on the last day of class. Deadlines for these assignments are on the course calendar in Canvas and are also listed in the course schedule section of the syllabus. More details about each of the assignments and the final research project and presentation will be posted on Canvas**.**

[1] Students who have any conditions or challenges that may make it difficult for them to meet the requirements of this course should contact Disability Support Services to discuss their needs and begin the registration process. Disability related requests for accommodations and services are evaluated individually, based on documentation and completion of the registration process. For more information see: https://dss.rice.edu/

The final portion of the grade will be based on two exams. The first exam will be in-class (***October 17)*** and will cover material from the first part of the course**.** The final exam will be weighted more heavily toward the material covered in the second half of the course, but will also draw on many of the readings from the first half of the class. This will be on our scheduled final exam date and time (TBA).

Grades will be determined as follows:

Class participation:	15%
Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	20%
Assignments:	
Social Policy in the News	5%
Factsheet:	10%
Social Construction & Policy	5%
Policy Paper and Presentation:	25%

Students are encouraged to keep track of their progress in this course and consult with me when they have questions or concerns. ***Please note that any query about grades should be done in person either during my office hours or by appointment—I will not discuss grades via email or telephone.*** The grading scale in operation for this course is provided below.

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-
100-99%	98-93%	92-90%	89-88%	87-83%	82-80%	79-78%	77-73%	72-70%	69-68%	67-63%	62-60%

Course Materials and Policies

There are two books that we will read in their entirety. Both will be available at the bookstore, but you can also purchase from Amazon or some other online seller:

- Hudson, John, Stefan Kuhner and Stuart Lowe. 2008. *The Short Guide to Social Policy*. University of Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Deacon, Alan. 2002. *Perspectives on Welfare: Ideas, Ideologies, and Policy Debates*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Canvas will be used regularly in the class for posting assignments, readings, and announcements. Please make sure to check all communications from me from Canvas. Students will submit assignments to Canvas as well, and this is the primary channel through which I will provide feedback.

Laptop use will only be permitted in class when we have in-class work. I will let you know in advance when we will be using them. Otherwise, you should not have them out during class time. It hopefully goes without saying, but just in case….cell phones should always be silenced and out of sight during class.

Rice University Honor code is in effect for all work done in this course. For more details, see http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/. This means that all written and oral work for this course must be your own. Since students in this course will be doing research for number of assignments that involve summarizing and/or characterizing arguments of others proper citation and attribution is imperative. Please consult with existing resources on proper citation, plagiarism, etc.:http://honor.rice.edu/files/2010/11/Acknowledgement-of-Sources-1dhouw1.pdf. If you still have questions, come and see me. Plagiarism is not tolerated in this course, and any work that has been plagiarized will receive an F grade.

Course Topics and Schedule

Tues. August 27: Course Introduction & Overview

✎ *Assignment 1: Social Policy in the News* (***due 11:59 9/2***)

Thurs. August 29: What is Social Policy?
No Class Meeting

- Koller, Ken. 2012. The American Political System (Chpt 16: Social Policy, p. 517-548).

Tues. Sept. 3: What is Social Policy?
What are the key social ills and social goods in society? Why do they matter? When and where is there a role for government intervention?

- Hudson, John, Stefan Kuhner and Stuart Lowe. 2008. *The Short Guide to Social Policy*. University of Bristol: The Policy Press. (Chpt. 1: Introduction, p. 1-14)
- Discuss readings, present news stories, conceptualization & typologies of social policy

Social Need, Social Problems, Concepts & Measurement

Thurs. Sept. 5: Social Need and Demographic Facts
Why study characteristics of the population across space and time?

- Liddiard, Mark. 2003. "Social Need and Patterns of Inequality and Difference," (pp 110-33). In *Social Policy*, eds. J. Baldock, N. Manning & S. Vickerstaff. NY: Oxford University Press.

✎ *Assignment 2: Factsheet with Problem Statement* (***due 9/26***)

Tues. Sept. 10: Fertility, Childbearing & Family Formation
What are some key demographic patterns with regard to fertility, childbearing, and family formation/composition? What explains these patterns? What implications do these patterns have for social need/social ills?

- Sweeney, Megan M. and R. Kelly Raley. 2014. "Race, Ethnicity, and the Changing Context of Childbearing in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40:539–58.

Thurs. Sept 12: Life Expectancy, Aging & Mortality
Why is the age structure of the population important? How and why is the older population changing in size and composition relative to the non-old population and what are the implications of this change for social policy?

- Uhlenberg, Peter. 1992. "Population Aging and Social Policy." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18: 449-74.

Tues. Sept. 17: Immigration

What are demographic facts about immigrants and patterns of their migration and settlement? What are the effects of immigration on the composition of U.S. population? What factors influence migration flows?

- Martin, Philip. 2013. "The Global Challenge of Managing Migration." *Population Reference Bureau* 68 (2): 1-8 (intro + sections on US and Canada).
- National Immigration Forum. 2018. *Factsheet: US Refugee Resettlement*. https://immigrationforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Refugee-Factsheet-_Updated-FY18.pdf
- Waters, Mary C and Tomas R. Jimenez. 2005. "Assessing Immigrant Assimilation: New Empirical and Theoretical Challenges." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31: 105-25.

Thurs. Sept. 19: In Class Work on Factsheet

✎ *Submit outline; sources, workplan update at the end of class*

- Video: *Children in American Schools (prepare answers to questions for 9/24)*

Tues. Sept. 24: Causal Pathways and Explanations for Poverty & Social Ills

- *How does looking at lifecycle and intergenerational poverty dynamics change our understanding of those in poverty, compared to looking at people during one point in time? Are social ills mostly caused by poor choices of individuals, structural factors that leave some individuals with poor choices, or both?*
- Dean, Hartley. 2016. "Poverty and Social Exclusion," pp. 3-24. In *Social Advantage and Disadvantage,* eds Hartley Dean and Lucinda Platt. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Video: *Promised Land (prepare answers to questions for discussion)*

Thurs. Sept 26: Beliefs, Attitudes & Social Constructions

- *Where do beliefs about poverty come from, how do attitudes about the poor and their plight shape policy? Who is deserving and undeserving of public assistance?*
- Hunt, Matthew O. and Heather E. Bullock. 2016. "Ideologies and Beliefs about Poverty" (pp. 93-116). In *The Oxford Handbook of The Social Science of Poverty*, eds David Brady and Linda M. Burton. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Schneider, Anne L. & Helen M. Ingram. 2005. "Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness" (pp. 1-34). In *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy*, eds David Brady and Linda M. Burton. NY: Oxford University Press.

✎ *Assignment 3: Attitudes about and social construction of the poor/needy*. (***due 10/10***)

Social Policy Origins, Evolution & Perspectives

Tues. Oct. 1: Social Security & Welfare Overview/Titmuss, Welfare & Equality

- Hudson, John, Stefan Kuhner & Stuart Lowe. 2008. *The Short Guide to Social Policy*. Bristol: The Policy Press. Chpt 2: Social Security, pp. 15-33)
- Deacon, Alan. 2002. *Perspectives on Welfare: Ideas, Ideologies, and Policy Debates*. Philadelphia: Open University Press. Chpt 1 (pp 11-30)

Thurs. Oct 3: Welfare and Self Interest: Murray and Field

- Deacon, Alan. 2002. *Perspectives on Welfare: Ideas, Ideologies, and Policy Debates*. Philadelphia: Open University Press. Chpt 2 (pp 31-48)
- Amadeo, Kimberly. 2019. "Universal Basic Income: Its Pros and Cons with Examples." https://www.thebalance.com/universal-basic-income-4160668

Tues. Oct. 8: Welfare and Paternalism: Mead and His Critics

- Deacon, Alan. 2002. *Perspectives on Welfare: Ideas, Ideologies, and Policy Debates*. Philadelphia: Open University Press. Chpt 3 (pp 49-62)
- McCarthy, Maggie. 2016. "Community Service Requirement for Residents of Public Housing." Congressional Research Service.

Thurs. Oct. 10: Welfare and Obligation/ Welfare and Temporary Support: The Communitarians/ Elwood

- Deacon, Alan. *Perspectives on Welfare: Ideas, Ideologies, and Policy Debates*. Philadelphia: Open University Press. Chpt 4 (pp 49-77); Chpt 5 (pp 50-88)

Tues. Oct 15: No Class Fall Break

Thurs. Oct 17: Midterm

The Pillars of Social Policy

Tues. Oct. 22: Welfare Policy & Reform in the US

- Ocampo, Jose Antonio and Joseph E. Stiglitz, Eds. 2018. *The Welfare State Revisited*. NY: Columbia University Ress. Stiglitz, Joseph E. "Chpt 1: The Welfare State in the Twenty-First Century." (p. 3-37)
- Deacon, Alan. 2002. *Perspectives on Welfare: Ideas, Ideologies, and Policy Debates*. Philadelphia: Open University Press. Chpt 6 (pp 89-101)

Thurs. Oct. 24: Housing Policy

- Hudson, John, Stefan Kuhner and Stuart Lowe. 2008. *The Short Guide to Social Policy*. University of Bristol: The Policy Press. (Chpt. 6: pp. 115-137)

Tues. Oct. 29: Housing Policy

- Guest Speaker, Tory Gunsolley, CEO of Houston Housing Authority

Thurs. Oct 31: Education Policy

- Hudson, John, Stefan Kuhner and Stuart Lowe. 2008. *The Short Guide to Social Policy*. University of Bristol: The Policy Press. (Chpt. 4: pp. 61-86)
- Video: *Waiting for Superman*

Tues. Nov. 5: Education Policy Panel

- Shelby Joe, General Academic Inc
- Others TBA Terrie Armstrong, Multilingual Programs Office, HISD

Thurs. Nov. 7: Labor/Employment Policy

- Guest Speaker, Dr. Paul Treacy, SOPA faculty, formerly at the US Department of Labor. Wage and Hour Division.

Tues. Nov. 12: Labor/Employment Policy

- Hudson, John, Stefan Kuhner and Stuart Lowe. 2008. *The Short Guide to Social Policy*. University of Bristol: The Policy Press. (Chpt. 3: pp. 35-59)

Thurs. Nov. 14: Health Policy Panel

- Hiedi Schwarzwald, Medical Director of Pediatrics for the Texas Children's Health Plan Centers for Children and Women
- Others, TBA
- Mike Lee, Mental Health & Jail Diversion Bureau, Harris County Sheriff's Office (https://www.harriscountyso.org/AboutUs/Picturewall_Chiefs_OrgChart.aspx); Non Emergency: (713) 221-6000
- Lisa Madry, Director of Community Engagement at Episcopal Health Foundation

Tues. Nov. 19: Health Policy

- Hudson, John, Stefan Kuhner and Stuart Lowe. 2008. *The Short Guide to Social Policy*. University of Bristol: The Policy Press. (Chpt. 5: pp. 89-114).

Thurs. Nov. 21: In class work on white papers

Tues. Nov. 26: No class

Thurs. Nov. 28: Thanksgiving Recess

Tues. Dec. 5: In class work on white papers

Thurs. Dec. 7: Presentations of white papers

TBA: Final Exam